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ABORTION, STOCK ACTIONS ARE COUNCIL TARGETS

GREENWICH, Conn. -- For the fourth time in recent years, the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church declined to join the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights, claiming that that organization's goals go far beyond the mandate of the General Convention.

The Coalition is made up of national religious organizations and is an active force in monitoring legislation and court actions that restrict abortion or women's access to abortion. Three times during the last triennium, the Council was asked to join the Coalition and declined, but this was the first time the issue had arisen since the new Council was seated after the 1979 Convention.

The 1976 and 1979 General Conventions expressed firm opposition to legislation designed "to abridge or deny the right of individuals to reach informed decisions in the matter of abortion and to act upon them," and the Coalition is viewed by proponents as a good vehicle for implementing that action. To that end, the Council's Standing Committee on National Mission presented a two-part resolution authorizing joining the Coalition and directing Church Center staff to prepare resource material to help dioceses implement the General Convention legislation.

Opposition to the proposal was based on two factors: the principle of abortion itself and the Coalition's incompatibility with the Convention actions and Anglican theology.

Council member Harry Griffith of Winter Park, Fla., spoke against the principle of abortion, saying he believed it was murder and that support for abortion on demand would lead to 1.5 million murders a year. "I urge you to awaken to this," Griffith said, adding: "If God does not judge the United States, he's going to have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah."

Dr. Paul Neuhauser of Iowa City, Iowa, moved to strike the clause about the Coalition, saying that Council had consistently decided that the Coalition was not "consonant with" the resolution of the 1976 General Convention. His amendment won support from a number of Council members, including Bishop Donald Parsons of Quincy and Dean Urban T. Holmes of the University of the South. Holmes argued that the position of the Coalition did not make sound theology and pointed out that there was no reason to join the Coalition simply to oppose an amendment to the federal Constitution. "This is not a choice between two wrongs."

In a standing vote, 25 of the 39 voting Council members supported the Neuhauser proposal and the amended resolution passed quickly.

In other action, the Council authorized its Social Responsibility in Investment subcommittee to change its policies to encourage companies to go beyond simple nondiscrimination in South African employment practices.

The six "Sullivan Principles" -- calling for desegregation, fair employment policies, equal pay, job training and promotion opportunities and improved housing, medical and family support -- have been a major tenet of stockholder action since they were first proposed in 1976 by the Rev. Leon Sullivan. Recently, however, leading black Christians -- including Dr. Charles R. Lawrence, President of the House of Deputies -- have disavowed the principles because they do not address the "systemic realities" of apartheid: a social structure that goes far beyond racial discrimination.

The resolution that Council approved notes that "while the Sullivan Principles deserve to be encouraged as an initial corporate response to the need for changing the inhuman conditions legalized under apartheid law, the Principles can in no way be sanctioned as sufficient goals in and of themselves for corporate participation in efforts to induce change in South Africa."

In introducing the resolution, Council member John Cannon of Detroit said that the proposal gave the committee a Council policy statement that would allow the Church to begin to draft resolutions and open negotiations in a more realistic approach to the issues.

Many companies even refuse to subscribe to the Sullivan Principles and one of these -- Dresser Industries -- became the target of Council discussions. The Council reauthorized a resolution asking Dresser to comply or divest itself of its South African affiliate.

Cannon reported that this resolution had won 11.3 percent when it was on the ballot this year; a huge proportion for such actions. In spite of this, he said, the firm "remained fairly adamant," refusing to negotiate with stockholder activists and restating its intention to be "a good corporate citizen" and "operate under the laws and customs" of South Africa.

Dresser was also one of a dozen firms cited in a resolution seeking an end to trade that may contribute to the violation of human rights in the Soviet Union. Cannon reported that Dresser -- which does \$144 million in Soviet trade and which recently won a contract to operate a plant there -- replied to inquiries with the assertion that it would adhere to the letter of the law and continue its business as long as federal codes permitted.

Council member Dixie Hutchinson of Dallas suggested that the stockholder actions may have been a factor in Dresser's recent refusal to contribute to a Church-run hospital drive in Dallas and asked if there was any possibility for further conversations. She was told that Dresser's secretary had been invited to submit any materials he wished to the Council and had not answered the invitation.

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